

The RSC Corner

By Ron Korcak, Chair, RSC

The new web-based Radiation Safety Management System (RSMS) is not ready yet but it will be ready soon! We received an update on the status of RSMS at the February Radiation Safety Committee (RSC) meeting. The enhanced drop down "task menu" will allow users to perform just about any permit modifications or requests directly on-line. The task menu also provides a "to-do-list" which shows pending permit actions. These improvements should make the transition to RSMS as easy as possible for our users.

From data distributed at the meeting it appears that on-line gauge training and other training is taking hold. The move to training via AgLearn is off and running.

As with the past several RSC meetings, security was again a topic of discussion. Jack Patterson provided an update regarding increased controls for irradiators. This stems back to a November 2005 Nuclear Regulatory Commission order amending the USDA irradiator license requiring increased controls on high activity sources. Implementation of these enhanced controls is mandated by May 13, 2006. Although there are additional pieces to what needs to be done (like assuring correct personnel reviews are completed) the most important is

the installation of monitoring systems at all applicable locations. The RSS is well on its way to assuring that the Department adheres to and implements the new protocols by the deadline. We also were briefed by Juanda Rodgers and Ken Miller, from APHIS, on their irradiator security program. APHIS has four of the ten irradiators currently covered by the USDA license, ARS has the other six.

The RSC also received information from Tom Sawicki who was with USDA but is now with the Department of Homeland Security at Plum Island. Tom provided a draft document that is being developed for extreme weather issues related to the protection/security of biological agents. This document will be used as a model that the RSC and RSS can modify for radiological materials. The issue of planning for extreme weather events was brought up at the last RSC meeting in reaction to post hurricane Katrina related issues. The RSS was tasked with developing modifications to the document. This will be an agenda item at the May RSC meeting.

Lastly, we would again like to extend our thanks to an RSC member who, after significant service on the RSC, decided to retire, Vic Randecker, Food Safety & Inspection Service. Vic will be missed by the Committee but we wish him well in his future endeavors.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to e-mail me at KorcakR@ba.ars.usda.gov.

NRC License Renewal

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has renewed our licenses to use radioactive material. License Number 19-00915-03 authorizes most of the radioactive materials used by USDA such as, unsealed radioisotopes, portable nuclear gauges, and electron capture detectors. License Number 19-00915-06 authorizes the use of irradiators (which contain strong radiation sources used to sterilize insects or deliver large radiation doses to cells or tissues.) We will be adding updated guidance to the web site (and will notify all users via email) of changes to procedures necessary to comply with the new license requirements.

Irradiator Security

The NRC has required that USDA (as well as other irradiator operators) increase the controls that prevent unauthorized access to our irradiators. The high activity radiation sources contained in irradiators would pose health risks should there be a loss of control or if they are used for malicious acts. USDA is required to ensure that only trustworthy and reliable individuals have access to the irradiators and that we detect and immediately respond to any unauthorized access to our irradiators. RSS is working with the irradiator operators to implement these new requirements in May 2006.

Nuclear Gauge Transfers

All transfers of radioactive material must be approved by RSS. Shipping documents for nuclear gauge transfers must use SI units and contain updated DOT requirements.

Contact your Health Physicist, if you plan to send your nuclear gauge to the manufacturer or another authorized recipient for repair or calibration. Your Health Physicist can answer your questions and assist you in preparing the required documents.

RSMS Update

During the week of January 17-20, the RSC conducted its annual audit of the Radiation Safety Staff. They were given an extensive briefing of the new database. The database has been undergoing modifications to make it more "user-friendly." All of the modifications are in place except for submitting lab surveys and leak tests. Once these protocols are thoroughly tested, release of the database is imminent.



Online Radiation Safety Training

Two on-line radiation safety training courses are available at no cost to all USDA employees (and others that work under a USDA permit). These courses can help you fulfill some of the training requirements for use of radioactive materials. You can register for these courses on the RSS web-site.

The **Basic Radiation Safety** course is for all employees who use radioactive material; it is required for isotope, gauge, and irradiator users and is recommended for all others who wish to increase their knowledge of radiation safety.

The **Radiation Safety Awareness** course is for those that work in areas where radioactive materials are used or stored and are interested in increasing their knowledge of radiation safety (such as maintenance and administrative workers.)

Associate User Authorization

We recently discovered an issue while processing requests for dosimetry badge service (RSS70). The individuals who were being added to dosimetry accounts (who were already working with radiation sources under existing Permit Holders), were not authorized Associate Users. They had not been added to any Radiation Source Use Permit.

Please remember that all individuals working with, or planning to work with, radiation sources under the supervision of a Permit Holder, must be added to the Permit Holder's permit. Only the Permit Holder and the Associate Users listed in the Radiation Source Permit are authorized to install, use, remove, or leak test, moisture/density gauges, irradiators, and unsealed radioactive sources. You should also remember that irradiator and gauge users must be badged. Dosimetry badges for all other radioactive sources are voluntary.

Submission of a Radiation Safety Program Dosimetry Request Form (RSS-70) is not a request to add an individual to your permit. The RSS-70 form is only used to request dosimetry service for an individual. To add an Associate User to your permit you must submit the Radiation Worker Information Form (RSS-10). Both of these forms can be found at the RSS website, www.rss.usda.gov, under the Forms button. If you have any questions, please call the Radiation Safety Staff office.

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